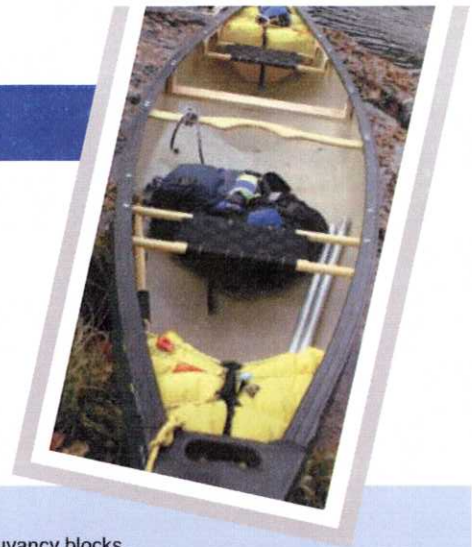


# COACHES' CLASSROOM



This article on 'Outfitting Your Canoe' continues Dave Rossetter's 'Coaches Classroom' series. Dave runs through the essential items and provides useful tips on fitting them all in ...

## AIR BAGS OR BUOYANCY BLOCKS

You have two main choices with the additional buoyancy that you put in: air bags or foam buoyancy blocks.



● Air bags

### Advantages

- > Cheaper
- > More flexible in their fit to the hull shape

### Disadvantages

- > Can be prone to punctures
- > More maintenance required



● Foam buoyancy blocks

### Advantages

- > Always there with low maintenance
- > Easy to add things to them ie bow or stern bags

### Disadvantages

- > Cost
- > Not as easy to fit well to some canoes as the shape is fixed

## Why you may need them

Canoes are inherently buoyant and as such are able to be paddled safely without the addition of further buoyancy. However, there are times when it would be to your advantage having additional buoyancy in your canoe.

### Open Water

If you are heading out away from the shore then adding buoyancy to the canoe is going to help the canoe stay higher in the water in the event of a capsize or swamping.

### White Water

Heading on to the rivers where the risk of getting the canoe swamped or broached are fairly high. The addition of buoyancy in this case can make the difference of getting the canoe back in one piece.

### Group work

Working with groups in canoes, additional buoyancy can help the coach's job become a bit easier. The buoyancy aids the rescuer in emptying the canoe and helps prevent the rescuer having to lift the canoe.

## OPTIONS FOR PUTTING IN BUOYANCY

### ● P Clips to Gunwales



P clips can have a nice finish and look neat tucked under the gunwale out of site. However they are not the most secure fitting. During the pressure that can build up when a canoe is broached the P clips are not strong enough to take the pressure of a mechanical advantage extraction system. The amount of force that is put on the system can easily pop them out. This then potentially leaves the canoe without any additional buoyancy. So if you intend using the canoe in white water I wouldn't advise the P clips.

### ● Drilled and Lashed



There is scary moment when you are standing with a drill by your new canoe. However this give the best option for securing in you additional buoyancy. A minimum of four holes per side of the canoe is enough to secure in 32inch air bags or most of the blocks available. This system means that if you get the canoe broached the load is spread over the hull of the canoe and is less likely to fail. This is my preferred method.

Both 'P Clips' and 'Drilled and Lashed' require you to tie the end or point of the buoyancy to the grab handle or another point at the end of the canoe. This helps prevent the buoyancy from working forward, and combined with a keeper strap offers the best way to keep your air bags secured. The keeper strap will need a 'D ring' fitted to the floor of the canoe. The other end of the keeper strap attaches on to the end grab as well.



## OPTIONS FOR SELF RESCUE

If you find yourself out of your canoe you have some options for self rescue. This one is where you have a rope secured to the bow / stern of the boat and you take one end and swim to the side. Once at the side you can then swing / pull the canoe in beside you. In future articles we will cover some of these techniques in detail.



● Swim Lines

If you need to move a swimmer around in the water or they are holding your canoe for security it is often best that they hold a swim tail and not the canoe itself. Holding on to a tail you can move the canoe to face different direction easier than if the swimmer is holding on to the canoe. This means that the canoe keeps its same hull shape relative to the water and therefore



● Swim Tails

has the ability still to be paddled. It also doesn't affect your stability.

**QUICK RELEASE KNOTS**



Highwayman's hitch ~ this knot is a way of securing your ropes that you will need to get to quickly. This would include your kit bag leashed in, painters and tow lines.



2



1



3

**KNEELING THWARTS**

When paddling you need to be the most efficient that you can be. A way to help get the canoe trimmed correctly and to help with stability and efficiency is to have a kneeling thwart. These are usually supplied unfitted so you need to spend time paddling your canoe and finding the optimum point in the canoe for it.

Once found and fitted you then have to think about your working space. Do you need to remove the yoke / centre thwart? Do I make it releasable so it doesn't get in the way for paddling? The reason for this is there is a risk of sliding forward on impact with a rock or bank and banging your thighs on the yoke / centre thwart.

If removing it then make sure that you have enough other thwarts or seats in to help the canoe stay in shape.



**KNEELING MATS AND HIP PADS**

To help with the connectivity to the canoe you may want to consider kneeling mats and hip pads. Kneeling mats can increase your comfort as well as connection to the canoe. There are a variety of types available to buy as well the option of cutting some of your old camping mats.

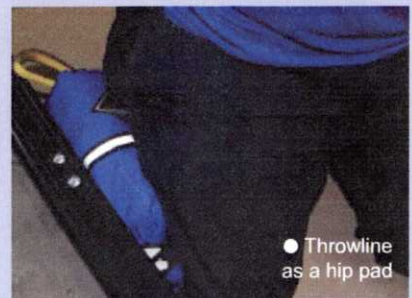


Consider whether you want glued / fixed ones or loose mats. Glued ones have the advantage of always being there but are prone to getting cut up from feet etc. and limit the potential flexibility in paddler placement in the canoe. Free ones don't float! Therefore you will need to leash them in. It does however; give maximum flexibility in paddler placement within the canoe.

Other options might include knee pads or trousers that have knee pads built in. Hip pads can help you keep control of the boat and prevent you from losing stability. Some of the kayak ones fit really well.



An alternative is to use a throwline as a hip pad.



● Throwline as a hip pad

**KEEPING THE BOAT TIDY**

With all the rope, spare paddles, poles and kit bags in your canoe it is important that you keep the canoe tidy. Stuff ropes into bags or in beside your buoyancy.



Slide paddles and poles up the side of your buoyancy or attach to the thwarts (illustrated image right).



**Next time - rescues!**

**Happy Paddling  
See you on the water**

*Dave Rossetter*  
[www.standingwaves.co.uk](http://www.standingwaves.co.uk)

